

Prevention Research Brief

From the Prevention Research Center at Tulane University



PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER
at TULANE UNIVERSITY

If you build it, they will ride:

Results from an evaluation of the St. Claude Avenue bike lane

Developing the bike lane:

Funded by Surface Transportation Funds, a three-mile bike lane opened on St. Claude Avenue in May 2008. The white-striped path runs through the Upper and Lower 9th Wards to the St. Bernard Parish line. The St. Claude bike lane was the first of many bike lanes scheduled to be installed in New Orleans.

Fulfilling a need:

Efforts to make the physical environment more conducive to physical activity are of critical importance in New Orleans, where obesity rates are high. Statewide, two out of three adults (65%)¹ and more than one-third of children and youth (36%)² are overweight or obese. Obesity is caused by an imbalance between caloric intake and energy output. A decrease in the number of public recreational facilities after Hurricane Katrina is a hindrance to those who depend on public spaces to exercise. By creating a safe dedicated space for cyclists to ride, the St. Claude bike lane aims to increase the number of riders and people riding in the correct direction (with traffic).

Designing an evaluation:

A 12-month evaluation of the St. Claude Avenue bike lane was conducted to observe the number of cyclists before and after the installation of the bike lane, and to assess whether the installation of the bike lane resulted in increased safety for bike riders. Researchers from the Prevention Research Center at Tulane University counted the number of men, women, boys and girls riding on the street and sidewalk before the bike lane was constructed in November 2007 and after it was installed in November 2008.

Evaluating the results:

The evaluation of the impact of the St. Claude bike lane on ridership indicates that more people were riding in 2008 than in 2007. There was a 56.8% increase in the average number of bike riders per day from November 2007 to November 2008. Additionally, there was a 75% increase in the number of people riding in the correct direction, and a 32% reduction in the number of people riding in the wrong direction.

These findings were consistent over the weekdays and weekends. While there were increases in both adult male and female ridership, the greatest increase in ridership was among adult females. In particular, there was a 133.6% increase in the average number of female riders per day, and a 142.5% increase in the number of females riding in the correct direction. These findings suggest that safety improvements in riding conditions may be particularly influential in adult females' decision to ride.

Identifying next steps:

Plans to develop bike lanes on the approximately 60 miles of New Orleans' roads to be resurfaced must be carried out with expedience. Increasing the number of bike lanes will provide more residents with

the opportunity for safe and convenient riding. Furthermore, it will allow researchers the ability to conduct more powerful studies with control streets in the same neighborhoods to determine how such environmental improvements impact the level of ridership, the safety of riders, and the number of crashes. Additionally, factors influencing females' decision to ride should be examined.



Key findings:

-There was a 56.8% increase in the average number of bike riders per day from 2007 to 2008.

-There was a 75% increase in the number of people who are riding in the correct direction (with traffic).

-There was an increase in both the number of females and males riding, with the greatest increase among females (133.6%).

References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2007). Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed Feb 2009 from www.cdc.gov/bffss.
- Pennington Biomedical Research Center (2008). Louisiana's report card on physical activity & health for children and youth – 2008. Put active play in every child's day.

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